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ABSTRACT

This bulletin describes toys and games found to be appropriate for use with children with disabilities. The toys, made by Discovery Toys, include products that promote exploration, play with both hands, sorting and matching, self-awareness, coordination, cause-effect relationships, imagination, construction, language use, and interaction with parents or teachers. The toys include puzzles, musical instruments, rattles, measuring cups, vehicles, foam blocks, art materials, dominos, theater characters, construction sets, and others. (JDD)

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A Mother's Choice — Toys For Children With Special Needs

ED 367 088

It is our pleasure to introduce to our readers two great friends of PAM whom we have respected for a very long time, Arlene and Francis Wanger. This couple, now in their thirty-fifth year of marriage, have had eleven children. Of the eleven, eight children were adopted, and another was cared for as a foster child. Ten of the eleven children have multiple handicaps. All have enjoyed particular care and love as a part of the unique Wanger family.

As you check out the descriptions of these various toys and games, you can sense that Arlene has had first hand experience using many of them. She can also help you secure any which you may wish to purchase. These particular toys happen to be "Discovery" toys. The samples we have on display at the PAM Centre are colorful and sturdy, and do come with a one-year warranty. Replacement parts are also available.

Arlene can be reached at 517-676-3777 or you may write her at 3281 Lyon Road, Mason, MI 48854. We thank her for sharing her toy expertise with our PIAM readership.

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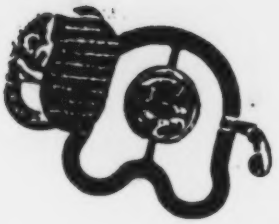
TONS OF FUN



This product promotes active exploration — *encourages play with both hands* — because of all the moving features. It is very light and easy to hold. These features — plus all the sensory elements, textures, sound, fun, bright colors — are important for a child with developmental delays. It can be hung with Boomering Links on a hanging frame so the child *can play with the toy without holding it in his/her hands.*

EYE CATCHERS

Book made of non-toxic, washable vinyl. Comes with 12 black and white Boomering Links. Black and white patterns on one side and colorful faces on the other side. Can be hung from hanging frame. Nice sturdy book *for children with poor motor control.*

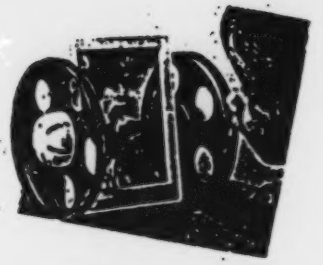
HANDY BEAR

Velcro rattles are welcome additions to any nursery with a special needs child as they *can be attached to wrists or ankles* as well as easily hung from crib bars or hanging frames. Could be used with mercury switches.

BOOMERING LINKS

Use Boomering Links to *hang toys to mobile.* Also, they can be used to attach toys to wheelchairs, high chairs, strollers, or a car seat. Very colorful. Very good toy to *sort, or match colors.*

ROLLING REFLECTIONS



Toy rolls with mirror always facing child. Fun and stimulating for children when they are learning to move about on the floor. *Fosters self-awareness.*

UP, UP & AWAY

Suction cup can be attached to wheelchair tray or other surfaces so children *without good hand control* can play with it. Very colorful.

TUMBLES THE CLOWN

A child with special needs can achieve movement from the lightest nudge--the power to move it can come from a hand, from a foot or even from a head stick. The clown's hat makes him *very easy to grasp* and is a perfect size for chewing. And another great feature -- the quiet noise response, perfect *for children who startle easily* with the squeaks and squawks of the louder infant toys. Can be used with the older children because it is not in baby pink and blue colors.

TUMBLE TIME

Light weight and easy to handle with one or two hands. Develops eye-hand coordination. Develops auditory and visual stimulation. Will not roll away from child. *A toy that older developmentally delayed children would enjoy.*

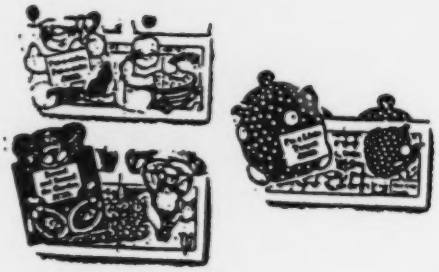
SPIN, RATTLE'N ROLL ACTIVITY RATTLE

This rattle is a hand-sized activity center which offers easy grasping, lots of bumps and angles for texture interest and bright colors which not only attract but *may be appropriate for the older child* who still enjoys the stimulation of this toy.

LIL SQUEAKER

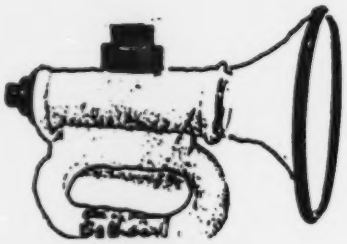
A toy that helps a child *develop coordination* in using both hands together. The squeeze/sound is a *cause-effect relationship.*

PLAYTIME RHYMES



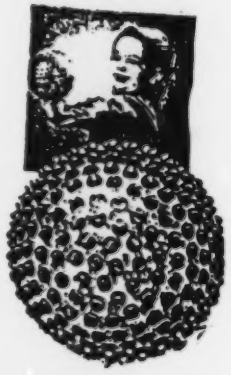
One of the best ways to get parents interacting with their child is to draw on their own pleasant childhood memories and these rhymes do just that. Plus, the rhymes can lead to matching body movements which add to the fun. Parents who are new to the reality of having a child with a special need often appreciate *toys that encourage interaction* as they attempt to learn about their child's preferences. Books build a bridge between child and parent.

BABY BUGLE



This light weight toy *makes noise by blowing or sucking* in it. That way some children, who do not know how to blow can have success with the Baby Bugle.

TANGIBALL



The wonderful texture of this ball offers great sensory play for a child with special needs. It is a great *massage ball* for young and old alike! Experiment with rolling it in playdough or wet paint to play with textures. Makes great designs.

BEEP BEEP BUGGY

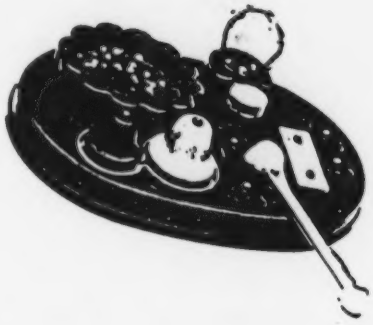
This is a great car for an *older child* with special needs who still enjoys a toy with definite sound responses. Its large size and easily manipulated features also make it easy for a child with *coordination challenges* to operate.

HIDE INSIDE

This toy offers a wonderful opportunity to teach tactile and auditory discrimination. Use the hiding container for lots of other purposes too. For example, as a group game, choose a puzzle with body part pieces in combination with the bag. Put the puzzle in the bag each child gets to pull out a piece, identify the body part and put the puzzle in place. Then they get to choose what the group has to do with their leg, arm, or face, whatever the piece was. They will have kids hopping on one foot, scratching their noses, wiggling ears or doing circles with their arms. The game is over when the puzzle is completed.

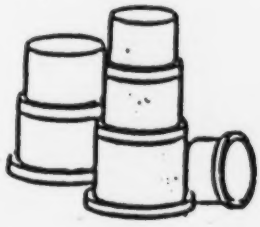
STRIKE UP THE BAND

Can use a wrist or hand strap with velcro to fasten to the mallet for children who can't hold on to it. Also, velcro to try onother surfaces so child can't knock it off, onto the floor. With this toy, they can have their own band. This toy is excellent *for children with short attention spans.*



MEASURE UP CUPS

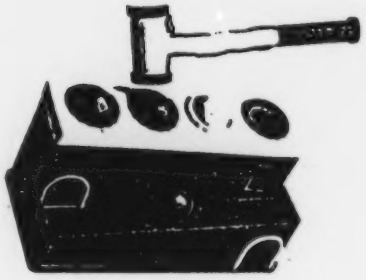
Easy to stack or nest. It *shows color, size, position, and volume concepts* to child. Use as a sorting game using Boomering Links to match colors of Measure Up Cups to Boomering Links. With a developmentally delayed child begin by using only two cups to stack or nest and just a couple of cups and links to match colors.



GIANT PEG BOARD

These pegs are big, which makes it easier to handle. Very good for a child with *coordination* problems. A child can string these pegs, stack them, put them in the peg board, and use them as "matching the colors" game. Extra pegs are available.

STRIKE A BALL



Teaches matching colors. Promotes whole body and eye-hand coordination. A fun toy. Very good for child with *short attention span.*

PLACE AND TRACE

Promotes language. Can be used with Clay Scentsations. Also, puzzle pieces can be used as cookie cutter. Puzzle pieces are raised above puzzle boards which makes it easier to put in the boards.

ROLL & BOWL

Drawing circles on a heavy paper as a pattern for bowling pin set-up will help some children with special needs to participate in this fun activity. Use a section of no-skid carpet as a base for the pins to help a child with poor coordination stabilize the pins. Lengths of wooden molding purchased at a lumber yard, temporarily affixed to the floor with florist's putty, make a track for the ball to maximize success for young children. For children using wheelchairs, long arm tongs make pin pick-up and set-up possible. If rolling the ball from the chair is difficult a lap ramp can be made with a length of shelving. Edge the shelving with the molding to keep the ball on track as it moves down the ramp.

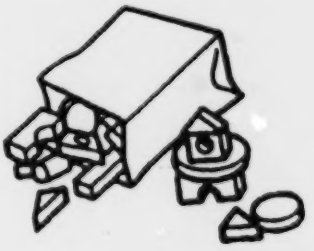
DOWN ON THE FARM

Promotes language. Can use as a one piece puzzle, then a two piece, on up until the whole puzzle is put together. Puzzle pieces are large, so they are easier to handle. Some children may never be able to put more than one piece together, but with this puzzle they have twelve different one piece puzzles they can work on. Also, could be used as a wall hanging.

MINI-MOTORS

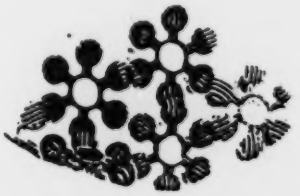
Wonderful new manipulative toy with enough variety to *stimulate any child's imagination.* Encourage children to draw their own backgrounds to use as playing board for the pieces, or supply a twisting roadway made with markers on heavy paper, through which they must maneuver their vehicles. *Enrich the language possibilities* by having children make or paint buildings to go along the roadway. The small size of these vehicles makes them ideal for mini-play scenes, for wheelchair or bedside trays. Try drawing your play scene with washable markers on a non-skid, solid-colored plastic placemat.

BLOCK PARTY



These blocks are fun to play with in the bath tub. When wet, blocks will stick on the wall. Easy to grasp. Also, a child can stack and build with these blocks on the floor. Very colorful.

BRIGHT BUILDERS



Can be hung from a mobile using Boomering Links so children can play with and look at them. Colors and textures provide visual and tactile stimulation. Provides *open-ended construction possibilities.*

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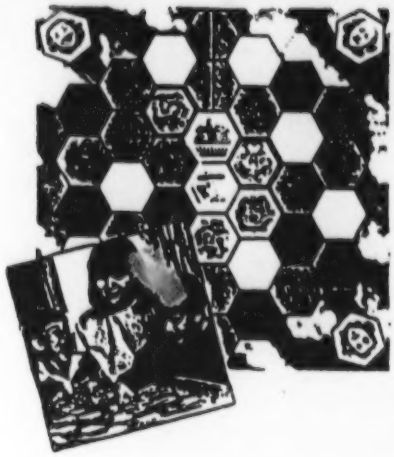
NEVER ENDING STORIES

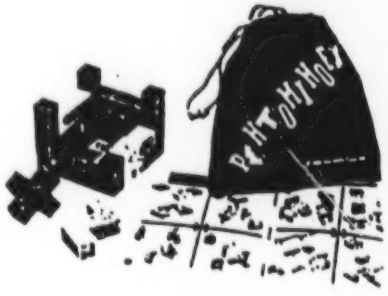


Story telling is a great tool for children and helps to stimulate language use for some children with special needs. Don't forget you can set aside the game rules and even the game board--the board in combination with the cards may be too much for some children to handle. Try drawing the cards from a pile and making up the story as you draw the cards. Each player gets four or five cards, thinks for a minute, and then all share their stories.

JUNGLE RUMBA

For some children, this will be a way to combine physical activity with learning of colors. For some children with special needs, color and shape concepts must be repeated over and over in order for mastery. Teachers will appreciate one more way to *present the color concept in a new setting.*

PENTOMINES



This activity toy is great for *increasing fine motor skills.* Enlarging the design with a copy machine may allow children with special needs to play. By enlarging the design to equal the size of design pieces, the child can match the pieces right on the design.

DOMINO CIRCUS

Fun practice for matching *when a child needs a lot of repetition.* Encourages language. Very colorful animals on one side of cards; the other side has large dots. Very sturdy, extra thick cards. Can be wiped off with damp cloth. Can use for sorting, matching, and counting.

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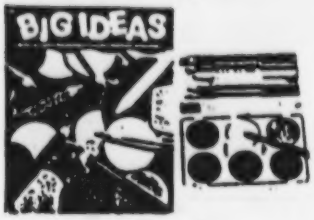
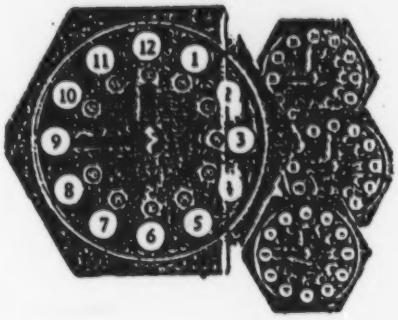
BIG IDEAS



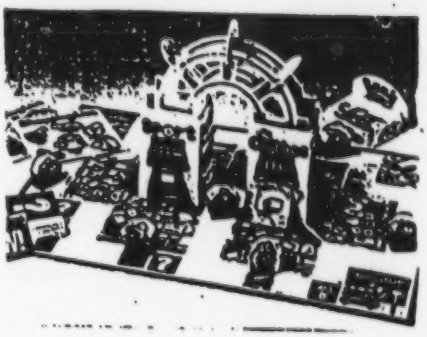
This self-contained art center is great for *wheelchair or bedside tray use.* Using a double-sided suction cup to attach a water cup to the tray will prevent accidental water spills. For some children with special needs, taping the handles of the brushes makes them easier to grip. The pencils are chunky for easier grip. Slip a plastic foam curler over the pencils for a non-slip grip, if needed.

TEACHING CLOCK



Teachers and parents of children with special needs *can design individualized templates to encourage specific skills.* Once any child has mastered time telling and no longer needs this clock for its teaching value, suggest that snap-shots portraits of family members and friends be inserted as a permanent wall clock arrangement. Kids will have fun choosing the models and taking the pictures!

FUN IN THE STORE

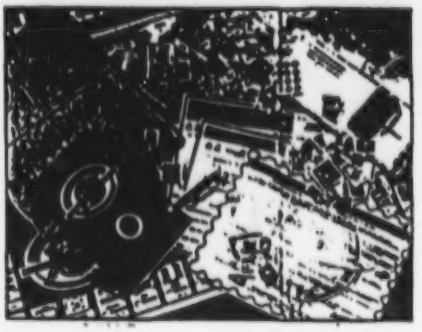


The game offers children with special needs an opportunity to practice skills and build confidence as they interact with their own communities. This game will be fun for teachers to use *as preparation for field trips* to local stores. The game board is not too juvenile looking so it may be appropriate for adults with developmental disabilities who are also learning to more fully access their community.

WILD CARDS

Promotes language. Can be used for matching and sorting.

PASSPORT TO FRIENDSHIP

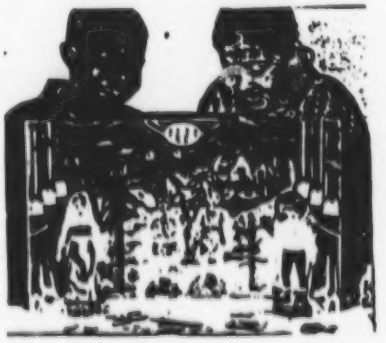


The world is opening up with more and more possibilities for children with special needs. One possibility is to establish friendships with other children far away. This is also the perfect gift for any child who will be *home-bound or bedridden for a period of time*. For all children, suggest that teachers use this packet in the classroom. Pen-pals can be used by dictating letters, also.

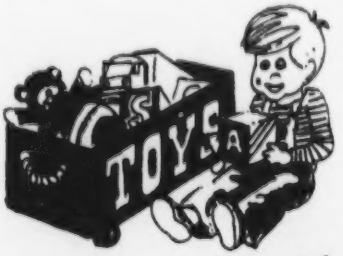
SUNSHINE MARKET

Helps children learn concepts like "in," out," "open," and "close". Very good for a developmentally delayed child. Children can learn about sorting and make believe. A toy that has a handle and can easily be carried.

ISLAND ADVENTURE STICKER THEATER



These movable theater characters will be more fun for some children with special needs if they are mounted on wider bases. Simply slot them into a styrofoam disc to add the needed stability. A length 1/4" dowel, knobbed at the end, will make an easier gripping device for some children to move the characters. For some children, taping the dowel to create a thicker grip will enable a firmer grasp. Parents and teachers will choose the best technique for the individual child if they are encouraged with these suggestion.



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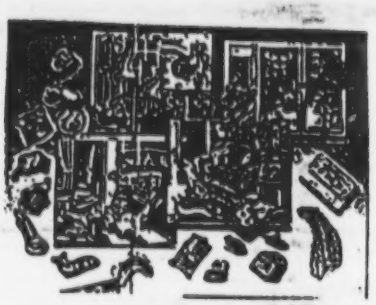
SILLY SHADOWS

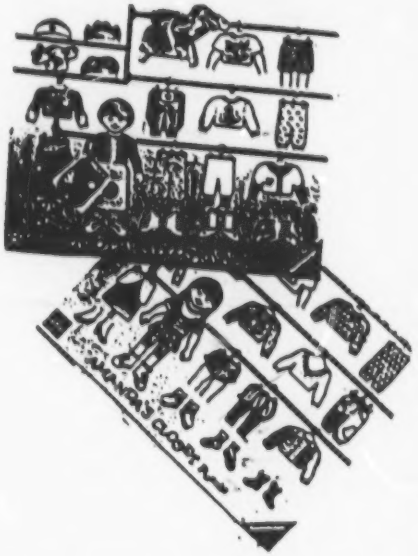


This is a nice variation of basic Lotto games, and may work well for the older child who can match similar images rather than exact replicas. The audio tape may help to focus a child's attention and *sharpen listening skills.*

BUILDERS AND BENDERS

The lid to the storage container top acts as a building base. Place the base on a non-skid surface for child with poor coordination. The individual pieces can be used on hanging frames for a small child *for visual stimulation.*

AMANDA AND TIMOTHY'S CLOSET PUZZLES



These puzzles have wonderfully simple and uncluttered images which make them easier for children to put their imaginations to work. Children with some special needs have difficulty handling the traditional paper doll experience. An adaptation of adding magnets or velcro to the pieces and using them on a cookie sheet or a flannel board will enable children to play along with these dolls. This *will be equally fun for the child's average peers.* ***NOTE:*** This is also a way to rescue the play value of a puzzle from which pieces are missing -- magnet or velcro the remaining pieces and use them on the refrigerator or a flannel board, discarding the background piece.

Editor's Note: *We are sorry that our illustrations fall so far short of doing justice to these colorful toys. However, we believe that they do serve a purpose here.*

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POCKET MUSICIAN

The harmonica is such a "no fail" instrument. It's the perfect first instrument for any child, including children with special needs. For children who have physical conditions affecting their breathing, the activities which require blowing, such as the harmonica, may provide needed exercise for the lungs. Music stores sells neck braces for those who cannot hold the harmonica. This comes with a video tape to teach you how to play the harmonica. Harmonica can be purchased separately.

This publication, as with so many in the past, has been made available to you through an IDEA State Initiated Grant for the PAM Assistance Centre awarded by the Michigan State Board of Education. (The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Michigan Board of Education or the U.S. Department of Education, and no endorsement is inferred.) The document is in the public domain and may be copied for further distribution when proper credit is given. For further information or inquires about this project contact the Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909.

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